



PROTECTION & ADVOCACY PROJECT

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BISMARCK, ND 58501-4071

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Testimony for Interim Senate Appropriations Committee

Submitted By: Veronica Zietz, Executive Director Protection & Advocacy Project

Good Afternoon Chairman Holmberg and members of the Interim Senate Appropriations Committee. My name is Veronica Zietz and I'm the Executive Director of the North Dakota Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Project. I'm here today to tell you about P&A's proposal for enhancing the system of emergency services for persons with disabilities in North Dakota. This one-time project is an investment in the amount of \$181,186 (budget attached) with an expected completion date of on or before June 30, 2023.

People with disabilities are often misunderstood by first responders and thus receive inappropriate and often traumatic interventions in crisis situations. This can cause long-term health and safety impacts for people with disabilities and often jeopardizes the safety of first responders and bystanders. This can also have the unintended impact of people with disabilities not receiving the help they need for the problem they have, creating a cyclical problem that contributes to an over reliance on public services.

Through this proposal, P&A will create a comprehensive training program for first responders including emergency services personnel, firefighters, and law enforcement to improve responses and services to people with disabilities. P&A will partner with the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) to develop training curriculum and identify qualified presenters to train 400 first responders statewide. NDRN has a history of successful work being done on a national level and existing programming and resources can be leveraged to duplicate this success in North Dakota.

First responders will gain knowledge and skills on best practices for working with people with disabilities and will learn how to appropriately recognize and respond to individuals with disability-related needs in emergency situations. This will enhance safety for first responders, people with disabilities, and bystanders. This will result in better services for people with disabilities, elimination of an over reliance on public systems, and improved health outcomes for people with disabilities.

This project will also have an education component for individuals with disabilities on how to ensure positive communication and interactions with first responders. The training will be provided to 400 people with disabilities and will focus on personal safety and crisis preparation including information on the development and implementation of personal emergency plans. This will have a positive

impact on relationships between the disability community and first responders, which will create increased access to timely health care and crisis response.

This proposal was formulated in response to rising crime rates and increased usage of emergency services related to the coronavirus pandemic. It will leverage partnerships with emergency responder associations/entities and provide a return on investment through decreased public and private spending on criminal justice costs, health care costs, and other costs related to over consumption of emergency services. This will have a lasting impact on citizens of North Dakota through improved public services, increased fiscal savings, enhanced trust in emergency response systems, and better relationships between public services and private citizens. The development and implementation of this project will ultimately save lives.

Thank you for your time and I'd be happy to address any questions.

Veronica Zietz, Executive Director Protection & Advocacy Project

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Budget	
Salaries: P&A staff	8,000
Benefits: P&A staff	3,414
Training Travel: 8 regional trainings @ state rate	9,920
Training Space: 8 regional trainings @ \$200/day	1,600
Training Meals: 8 regional trainings @ state rate	14,000
Training Supplies: 8 regional trainings @ \$89/training	712
Training Continuing Education and Compensation: 400 professionals @ \$50 each	20,000
Training Curriculum @ \$5.70 each	4,560
Postage: training invites @ \$0.55 each, participant packets @ \$2.40 each	2,800
Printing: training invites @ \$2.40 each, training materials @ \$3 each	6,240
IT Equipment: consultant computer @ \$1,825	1,825
IT Data Processing: P&A staff and consultant computer expenses @ \$209.25/person	2,762
IT Telecom: P&A staff and consultant telecommunication services @ \$28/person	370
Professional Services: consultant program coordinator @ \$60.60/hour and consultant speaker fee @ \$5,000	103,024
Advertising: consultant recruitment	1,959
Total	181,186